

# **The Impact of Misunderstanding the Enemy's Will to Fight in OIF**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **Abstract**

The Impact of Misunderstanding the Enemy's Will to Fight in OIF by MAJ Scott A Sparks, U.S. Army, 46 pages.

The purpose of this monograph is to provide an in-depth study of how the U.S. miscalculation of Iraqi will to fight during the planning of Operation Iraqi Freedom contributed to post major conflict operational problems. The specific nature of these problems were foreseen and could have been avoided by adjusting the timing of the campaign and force structure in place prior to the beginning of the conflict. The monograph will raise issues specific to Operation Iraqi Freedom that have implications for future use in the American military.

The term will as it relates to military capacity is in some respects an enigma. It is referred to often in terms of defeating the enemy's will to resist or maintaining our will to continue the attack. However, will is not defined in U.S. joint doctrine. The German military theorist, Karl von Clausewitz defines war as an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will. Therefore, the concept of will is central to war. Despite the importance of the concept, there is no concise definition of will or its components in the United States military doctrine. This lack of attention to the concept of will has contributed to the situation faced by American and Coalition forces fighting an insurgency in Iraq today.

The efforts of the United States military to understand will are hampered by its lack of definition. What one person means when they use the term will may or may not be the same as another. Only by defining will can this central concept and its many ramifications be properly understood and acted upon. Accordingly, the following definition was suggested as a starting point for fully understanding and exploiting will's place in war: the combination of multiple components that coalesce into a collective desire of a group, or groups, to initiate or continue actions to achieve a desired goal.

Understanding the enemy's will to fight has been challenging throughout history. The historical analysis demonstrates that attempting to defeat an enemy's will by attacking it as a whole is challenging. The aggressors in each of the case studies failed to ask themselves what they would do if the enemy failed to respond as predicted. Each characterized their enemy's will as a whole and attacked it as such. At the operational level, each of the aggressors met their objectives. However, their operational success did not translate into strategic success.

Current American military doctrine and thought has met with the same challenges in Iraq. The American focus on major combat operations played a large part in shaping the final plan for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Despite warnings from the Combined Forces Land Component Staff that their plan would actually facilitate conditions for an insurgency unless more troops were added to the force structure, the Americans executed the operation as planned. The prevailing view, supported by doctrine, was that the war would be decided during major combat operations. What most realize today, is that the short term successes of major combat operations would merely set the conditions for the long term challenges of military operations other than war.

There is no one thing that was the root cause of the American problems in Operation Iraqi Freedom. When American decision-makers confined their view of the Iraqi will to fight to Hussein and his governmental apparatus, they jeopardized their own ability to achieve their strategic goals. The American military's understanding of how an enemy's will to resist changes the calculus of planning and executing military campaigns is incomplete. Understanding will involves trying to understand and predict complex human interactions that generate outcomes that are as likely to defy logic as bow to it. But that does not alleviate the necessity of reducing this gap in American military doctrine and thought. The Global War on Terrorism will not be won by the strongest; the side that undermines the collective desire of their enemy to resist will win it.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
DEFINING WILL .....	4
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON WILL.....	7
OPERATION COURT OF JUSTICE: THE ATTACK ON VERDUN IN WORLD WAR I.....	8
GERMANY’S 1917 DECISION FOR UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE IN WORLD WAR I.....	10
JAPAN’S DECISION TO INITIATE WAR WITH THE UNITED STATES .....	13
THE SOVIET UNION’S WAR IN AFGHANISTAN.....	15
SIGNIFICANT FACTORS INFLUENCING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENEMY’S WILL .....	18
U.S. DOCTRINAL REVIEW AND ANALYSIS .....	20
LINKING STRATEGIC GOALS TO OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES.....	21
INCORPORATING WILL INTO OPERATIONAL PLANNING.....	23
DOCTRINAL FOCUS .....	26
OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM AND THE WILL OF THE ENEMY .....	27
CONCLUSION .....	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	39

## INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the movie “The Gladiator” there is an exchange of dialogue that is extremely insightful for any member of the military. Upon finding out that their Germanic foes preferred to fight the Roman army at the height of its power rather than parley, Quintas, a Roman general, remarks to Maximus Meridius, the Roman commander, that “A people should know when they are conquered.” Maximus replies with the question, “Would you Quintas, or I?” In the movie it took a crushing and bloody defeat on the field of battle for the Germanic tribes to accept that they were in fact defeated. Knowing when you are conquered means accepting defeat. An enemy’s propensity to accept defeat is likely to be in inverse proportion to their will to resist.

The great German military theorist, Karl von Clausewitz defines war as, “An act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”<sup>1</sup> Following Clausewitz’s line of reasoning, war is a contest of wills between two adversaries – both trying to impose their will on the other. Therefore, the concept of will is central to war. Interestingly, despite the importance of the concept, there is no concise definition of will or its components in the United States military doctrine. This lack of attention to the concept of will has contributed to the situation faced by American and Coalition forces fighting an insurgency in Iraq today.

The purpose of this monograph is to provide an in-depth study of how the U.S. miscalculation of Iraqi will to fight during the planning of Operation Iraqi Freedom contributed to post major conflict operational problems. The specific nature of these problems were foreseen and could have been avoided by adjusting the timing of the campaign and force structure in place prior to the beginning of the conflict. The monograph will raise issues specific to Operation Iraqi Freedom that have implications for future use in the American military.

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<sup>1</sup> von Clausewitz, Carl, *On War*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 75.

Throughout history, combatant states and organizations have sought to impose their will on their enemy in order to settle disputes in war. Whether or not these combatant states in contemporary times were cognizant of Clausewitz's thoughts on the subject, they tried to achieve their goal by a combination of destroying their enemy's army, occupying portions or the entirety of their enemy's country, and destroying their enemy's will to continue fighting.<sup>2</sup> In a conventional war, the means described by Clausewitz makes sense. Understanding the will of an enemy is extremely challenging in the best of circumstances. When an army fights an unconventional war shortly after or while simultaneously conducting a conventional one, understanding the will of the enemy becomes even more complex. The will of the enemy, in whole or in part, may keep him fighting when his country has been overrun and his conventional armed forces destroyed. Defeating the enemy's armed force is much easier than impressing the fact of defeat upon his psyche, especially in a time when American and selected Allied forces can impose death and destruction with almost surgical precision. It is ironic that American preoccupation with reducing the level of bloodshed inherent in war may actually reduce the likelihood of breaking a potential enemy's will to resist. In order to truly win an unconventional war, the U.S. has to understand the components that make up the enemy's will, utilize or marginalize some of them where possible, isolate those components that will not compromise and build campaign plans that focus sufficient effort on defeating the enemy's will, not just his capabilities.

The methodology used by the monograph is to begin by defining will as it relates to military capacity and briefly cover military theory on will. As mentioned earlier, there is no succinct definition of will or its components in the United States military doctrine; although there are an abundance of references to will and its importance in military operations.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 90.

After defining will as it relates to military capacity, the monograph will follow with a historical perspective on military conflicts or operations that have a misunderstanding of the enemy's will as a major component. The following military conflicts or operations will be analyzed: Germany's attack on Verdun in World War I and Germany's 1917 decision to resume unrestricted submarine warfare in World War I; Japan's decision to initiate war with the United States in World War II. The Soviet-Afghan War from 1979-1989 brings in a unique perspective that the other case studies lack - unconventional war. This is particularly important in light of the fact that the United States did not foresee itself conducting unconventional war in Iraq on the scale that is presently being conducted. Throughout the historical analysis, the inability of the aggressor nation, the one explicitly depending on breaking the will of their adversary, to adequately predict their enemy's reactions is especially enlightening. The purpose of historical analysis is to determine how strategic level perceptions of the enemy's will to resist can translate to operational goals and objectives that are fundamentally flawed.

Following the historical case studies, the monograph will review and analyze joint doctrine for building campaign plans and achieving strategic goals through operational objectives. The National Military Strategy, Joint Publication Doctrine Series and Joint Operating Concepts provide the framework for analysis. Additionally, the monograph will analyze whether the focus of doctrine is oriented too heavily on major combat operations and what new trends in doctrine would better prepare American forces to incorporate analysis of the will enemy into the planning process.

Finally, the monograph will analyze Operation Iraqi Freedom's shortfalls and develop recommended solutions that could be applied to future conflicts of similar nature and improve the United States' military ability to achieve the desired political endstate. The process that the U.S. went through to arrive at and then execute the decisions from the strategic to operational levels is given detailed attention. Several individuals have some insight on potential systemic problems involved with calculating the impact of the enemy's will to fight on U.S. operations.

The lack of attention the United States military has given to understanding an enemy's will to fight was not the sole contributor to the situation in Iraq today. However, placing greater emphasis on defining and understanding will as it relates to the military capacity of future and potential enemies would have led to American and Coalition forces being better placed to determine success than they are currently.

## DEFINING WILL

The term will as it relates to military capacity is in some respects an enigma. It is referred to often in terms of defeating the enemy's will to resist or maintaining our will to continue the attack. However, will is not defined in U.S. joint doctrine. When it is referred to the meaning is usually implied or it is assumed the user understands what the writer means. Only in one case, a endnote in the *Joint Operational Environment – Into the Future*, is it defined. In order to bound the problem of how to understand and degrade the will of an enemy it is important to define what the term means and how to utilize that understanding to help accomplish the desired goals of the nation.

Webster's Dictionary defines will as "the collective desires of a group."<sup>3</sup> The white paper *Joint Operational Environment – Into the Future* cites Wayne Hall's definition in a endnote as "the resolution, sacrifice, and perseverance of individuals and groups of people to win in a competitive struggle."<sup>4</sup> Looking at the term more broadly, Key defines national will as "popular dedication to the nation and support for its policies."<sup>5</sup> The term national will is certainly useful if a nation is fighting another nation because it implies that there is only one enemy collective desire to understand. The problem becomes more complicated when faced with an enemy that is not homogeneous. This is the type of problem faced by U.S. forces today in Iraq.

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<sup>3</sup> Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

<sup>4</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The Joint Operational Environment – Into the Future, Final Draft*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004) 193.

<sup>5</sup> Key, Lawrence E, *Cultivating National Will: An Introduction to National Will*, (Maxwell, AL: Air University Press, 1996), 3.

Fighting an insurgency and trying to define the will of an enemy complicates the problem. Does an insurgency, or a nation, have a collective desire or policy? In some cases, the answer is yes, but not in all. This begs the question, what are the component parts of the will, or collective desires, of an enemy?

Taking the two definitions used above, the component parts would come from many different areas of the group. Tribal and family ties would have an impact on the desires and dedication of a group. Religious and cultural views would, too. Economic well being could be a factor influencing the degree of support a group is willing to provide. The potential for power, real or perceived, derived from supporting the collective desires is a possible factor shaping the landscape of an enemy's will to fight. Real and potential allies can also influence a nation or group's will to resist. The point is that there are many factors that shape and mold the components that might be incorporated into an enemy's will to resist. These components exist in democratic and despotic nations. They exist in otherwise disparate groups of people making common cause to fight a common enemy, if only for a little while. Even though the components that make up a nation or group's will to resist are hard to identify, and even harder to quantify, it is easier to quantify the components than it is to quantify the whole. Identifying and, where possible, quantifying these components is critical to understanding why an enemy would continue fighting in the face of overwhelming odds. It is even more crucial to understand how to reduce and eventually break the enemy's will.

Understanding the components of the enemy's will to fight helps the friendly force commander figure out how to attack and shape the individual components that make up the whole of the enemy's collective desires and dedication. It takes the problem out of a conceptual framework and puts it into terms that operationalize it. Defining and understanding the term will, as it relates to military capacity, is of no use to the commander if the definition and understanding do not directly contribute to useful application during operations.

The discussion of will as it relates to military capacity suggests that a useful definition of the term would be: the combination of multiple components that coalesce into a collective desire of a group, or groups, to initiate or continue actions to achieve a desired goal.

The definition of will today is important for two reasons. First, it helps the commander defeat the enemy, and, secondly, it implies that the way to effectively fight potential enemies has, to some extent, changed from the past.

This definition helps the friendly force defeat the enemy by highlighting the importance of the components rather than focusing all of the effort and energy on the collective desire of the enemy. When viewed as a whole, will is metaphysical. The whole of will is greater than the summation of its components in an imperceptible way. This suggests that direct attacks on will are challenging at best.

Attacking and shaping the components of an enemy's will is easier than attempting to break his will *in toto*. The components are more simple to identify and attack. Shaping or attacking an individual component is also easier to measure. In an insurgency with more than one group, approaching the problem from this aspect would encourage attempts at influencing the different groups rather than influencing the insurgency as a whole.

Carl von Clausewitz believed that there was really only one way to beat an enemy. He laid out the three objectives a nation must achieve to win a war: destroy the enemy's army, occupy his country to such an extent that he cannot continue fighting, and break his will to resist.<sup>6</sup> Of these three objectives, Clausewitz explicitly claims, "everything is governed by a supreme law, the decision by force of arms."<sup>7</sup> If it was that simple, the situation the U.S. faces in Iraq would be drastically different than it is today. The coalition forces soundly defeated those segments of Saddam Hussein's army that chose to fight, and allowed those who chose not to fight to remain alive. The coalition has occupied all of Iraq. Yet, there is an insurgency that continues

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<sup>6</sup> Clausewitz, 90.

to resist the transformation of the country's political form. The coalition has been unable to break the insurgency's will to resist despite overwhelming superiority at the points of contact. BG(Ret) Stan Cherry believes that, in the limited conflicts of today and the future, breaking the will of the enemy to continue resisting has taken on more importance than it had in the past.<sup>8</sup>

If true, this change in the importance of the will to resist relative to the other two objectives laid out by Clausewitz significantly alters the calculus of linking operationally achievable objectives to strategic goals. Before the initiation of combat, it is hard to accurately predict how a nation or group's will to fight will react. If the strategic goals rely to any degree on the prediction of how the enemy will respond to force, then the goals lay upon a shaky foundation. The will to resist is not strictly a function of military capability or territory retained. It is a function of the various components that keep the enemy's will to resist alive and functioning in the face of adversity. Military capability and territory still, and likely always did, contribute to an enemy's will, but not to the extent Clausewitz and U.S. doctrine assumes. In a world where very few nations can stand up to the U.S. military in a conventional sense, their will to resist American policies is less likely to be measured as a function of capabilities and territory. Today's measurements are just as much a function of perception and information.

Historically, many nations have had a hard time correctly identifying and quantifying a nation or group's will to resist and linking it to achievable goals and objectives. The problem we face today in Iraq is in fact not a new problem. Nor is it a problem confined to limited wars.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON WILL**

Misunderstanding an enemy's will can have major repercussions in military operations. These can range from broadening a war in some aspect in an attempt to bring the conflict to an acceptable conclusion, to starting a war based upon faulty assumptions or oversimplification of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>8</sup> Cherry, Interview by author, 20 September 2004, Leavenworth, Kansas.

the problems. This monograph will examine chronologically four conflicts or operations that have a misunderstanding of the enemy's will as a major component. As conceived, none of these operations or conflicts had much chance for success because of their misunderstanding of their enemy's will to resist. The purpose of this historical examination is to demonstrate how strategic level misperceptions of the enemy's will translate into operational goals and objectives that are fundamentally flawed.

In each of the historical case studies, one nation tries to break their enemy's will to continue to fight. The first three case studies are conventional operations: the German operation against Verdun in World War I, the 1917 German decision to initiate a sustained campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare, and the Japanese decision to attack the United States fleet in Pearl Harbor in World War II. The last case study, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, is an example of a conventional operation that surprised the Soviets by quickly turning into an insurgency.

## **OPERATION COURT OF JUSTICE: THE ATTACK ON VERDUN IN WORLD WAR I**

In December of 1915, the leadership of Germany faced the problem of winning a two front war before attrition deprived them of the opportunity for victory. Stalemate in the Western and Southern fronts was balanced by success on the Eastern front. To the Chief of the German General Staff, General von Falkenhayn, "Great Britain was the arch enemy that held the crumbling Anglo-French-Russian coalition together."<sup>9</sup> While Germany was unable to attack Great Britain directly, she could use a combination of unlimited submarine warfare and an offensive against France designed to force a separate peace.<sup>10</sup> Falkenhayn calculated that the

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<sup>9</sup> Herwig, Holgar, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918*, (London, UK: Arnold, 1997), 181.

<sup>10</sup> Strachan, Hew, ed, *World War I: A History*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 34.

resulting loss of ships and supplies combined with the loss of France and its army would put Germany in a position to win the war.<sup>11</sup>

Falkenhayn directed his offensive against Verdun. Sitting astride a historical avenue for enemies to use to attack the heart of France, Verdun was a location carefully chosen for its emotional appeal to force the French to fight a costly battle that, in Falkenhayn's mind, they could only lose. In Falkenhayn's view, "Verdun was an object for the retention of which the French General Staff would be compelled to throw in every man they have. If they do so, the French will bleed to death."<sup>12</sup> The bloody fields and forts of Verdun were to become the means to break the French will to fight. The irony of Falkenhayn's logic is that in trying to avoid a long war of attrition he deliberately chose to embark upon an operation that was expressly designed to maximize attrition.

Falkenhayn's logic at Verdun seems to follow the dictates of Clausewitz's three objectives. 'Bleeding the French to death' certainly follows the objective of destroying the enemy's army. Occupying Verdun is not occupying all of France, but it was deemed territory of such significance that it would force the French to fight and die, thereby contributing significantly to their inability to continue fighting. Most importantly in Falkenhayn's mind, Verdun would destroy the will of the French to continue fighting by its sheer horror. Falkenhayn assured Wilhelm II that capturing Verdun itself was immaterial because the victory would be achieved not against the soldiers of the Meuse, but against the politicians in Paris.<sup>13</sup>

Begun in late February, 1916, Verdun finally, and mercifully, wound down to a close in September. The second front to be provided by unrestricted submarine warfare was slow to develop and then quickly halted in the face of sharp diplomatic protests from neutral countries,

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<sup>11</sup> Keegan, John. *The First World War*. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 277-278.

<sup>12</sup> Herwig, 182.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 182.

primarily the United States.<sup>14</sup> The disaster at Verdun, calculated to destroy the France's ability and will to fight, did indeed bleed the French army; however, it bled the German Army at almost the same rate. The French will to resist was not broken and Falkenhayn was removed from his post.

Conceived as an indirect approach to attack Great Britain, Verdun, in reality, was a direct assault on the will of the French people - an assault that they withstood. From the German perspective, Verdun's potential effectiveness was based purely on an assumption of its impact upon the will of the French to continue fighting. Falkenhayn was correct in his assumption that France would fight to the death to retain Verdun. Forcing a fight of that magnitude was his operational objective. This would lead to his strategic goal of breaking the French will to stay in the war. But he failed to achieve his desired goal because he miscalculated the depth of France's will to continue fighting.

## **GERMANY'S 1917 DECISION FOR UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE IN WORLD WAR I**

Having failed in their bid to break the will of the French at Verdun, the German leadership reassessed their options in search of a way to bring the war to a favorable conclusion. The losses their army had sustained during their offensive against Verdun and the British Somme offensive precluded any aggressive actions on the Western front by their army in the short term. Like Falkenhayn, Admiral von Holtzendorff, Chief of the Admiralty Staff, believed that Great Britain remained the driving force in the Allied coalition.<sup>15</sup> With the possibility of offensive ground combat operations on the Western front ruled out by Germany's leaders, the submarine now provided Germany with her only hope of forcing Great Britain to accept peace.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 186.

<sup>15</sup> Steffen, Dirk, trans. Notes on the memorandum by Admiral von Holtzendorff of 22 December 1916 regarding unrestricted U-boat warfare. <http://www.gwpda.org/naval/holtzendorffmemo.htm>. Accessed 18 August, 2004, 1.

Because of her dependence on imports for food and war material, the Germans naval staff calculated that the reinstitution of unrestricted submarine warfare would force Great Britain to sue for peace within five months.<sup>16</sup> Charles Ikle characterized the intent of the German submarine campaign as a “coercive measure, whose effects in interdicting the enemy’s military supplies were secondary.”<sup>17</sup> The Germans believed that unrestricted submarine warfare was the key to breaking the will to fight of Great Britain. By assigning Great Britain the role of the “driving force,” defeating them by extension made the defeat of the other Allied powers in the coalition a certainty.

While couched in the form of concrete analysis, the calculations and predictions of the German leadership rested on assumptions. There were two main assumptions. The first was that sinking 600,000 tons of shipping a month for five months would force Great Britain to sue for peace.<sup>18</sup> The second assumption was that even though unrestricted submarine warfare might bring the United States into the war against the Germans, it would not materially influence the German position because Great Britain would seek peace and leave the U.S. in the war without major allies.<sup>19</sup>

The second assumption rested on the first assumption becoming fact. In calculating the first assumption, the hard numbers called for by the naval staff were actually achieved, but instead of forcing Great Britain to sue for peace, it forced them to expand their land used for food production, nationalize their shipping and institute the convoy system.<sup>20</sup>

The cause, sinking 600,000 tons of British shipping a month, did not lead to the desired effect of breaking the British will to continue fighting. Ironically, for the Germans, the British decision to continue fighting was directly linked to the second German assumption. The Germans

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<sup>16</sup> Ikle, Charles, *Every War Must End*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 44-47.

<sup>20</sup> Herwig, 318-319.

and the British both knew that unrestricted submarine warfare would likely draw the United States into the war. From the German perspective, this factor was immaterial because “they argued as if England’s decision to sue for peace were independent of America’s joining the war on her side.”<sup>21</sup> The Germans took this view because they misunderstood the British will to continue fighting, just as they misunderstood the French will to continue fighting at Verdun. The Germans did not take into account how the United States entry into the war would influence Great Britain’s decision making.

In the German decision making process, Great Britain’s will to fight was tied simply and inextricably to her shipping. Only unlimited submarine warfare would provide the losses necessary to force the British government to call for peace.<sup>22</sup>

The broadening of the conflict caused the British to adapt to the increased losses from submarines. It also increased their expectation that the German actions would draw to their cause an ally with tremendous potential. Buoyed by the addition of an ally with vast potential and sustained by her own ability to adapt to the expanded horizons of the war, Great Britain’s will to fight remained resolute.

The United States entry into the war was a direct result of the German’s submarine campaign. Fostered as an operation to secure victory on their terms, the German attempt to break the will of Great Britain had the unintended consequences of lowering Germany’s chances for a military decision to almost nothing. Decision-making that depended on the symbiotic relationship of their major assumptions proved disastrous for the Germans. Even though Germany achieved its operational objective of 600,000 tons of British shipping sunk per month for five months, they failed to achieve their strategic goal when Great Britain refused to sue for peace.

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<sup>21</sup> Ikle, 47.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 48.

## JAPAN'S DECISION TO INITIATE WAR WITH THE UNITED STATES

On 30 November 1941, Japan decided to initiate war with the United States by bombing the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor. The decision was made after weeks of fruitless negotiations over American economic sanctions against Japan, and Japan's involvement in the Asian mainland and China, failed to achieve satisfactory results for either side. Japan's decision to initiate war was propelled by a desire to expand their control of the people and resources in Southwest Asia. Looking at the decision to attack simplistically, Japan's military (specifically the Navy) felt like she had no choice but to preemptively attack the United States in order to secure her intended conquests in Southeast Asia from the anticipated American attack in response to their move south. By acting preemptively, Japan felt she could tip the scales in her favor and force the United States to accept Japan's acquisition of Southeast Asia. Japan's strategic goals relied on her breaking the American's will to fight.

In Japan's eyes, the future war with America would consist primarily of a few quick and overpowering blows as Japan expanded its defensive perimeter, followed by a period of American inability to overcome their initial setbacks. America would then be unwilling to accept the loss of life necessary to defeat Japan and would accordingly sue for a peace that was acceptable to Japan. Japan had no plan to force the United States to accept defeat other than the chimera of a decisive victory at sea (which Pearl Harbor was supposed to provide) and their hope of a lack of will on America's part.

Staff analysis undertaken by the Japanese prior to their initiation of war seemed to support this view when it held that Japan "cannot exclude the possibility that the war may end because of a great change in American public opinion."<sup>23</sup> The architect of the plan to bomb Pearl Harbor, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the Japanese Combined Fleet Commander in Chief, counted

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 3-4.

on his plan facilitating that change in American public opinion. Pearl Harbor was essential to “strike deep at the enemy’s heart at the very beginning of the war and thus to deal a blow, material and moral, from which it will not be able to recover for some time.”<sup>24</sup>

Ironically, the same staff analysis that held out hope for their ability to break the United States’ will to fight came to the sobering conclusion that “war with the United States will be long...It is very difficult to predict the termination of a war, and it would be well-nigh impossible to expect the surrender of the United States.”<sup>25</sup>

If America failed to follow the course predicted by Japan’s leaders and sue for peace within a year or two, Japan knew they could not win. After Pearl Harbor, Japan had no plan to break the United States’ will to continue fighting the war. Japan’s reserves of natural resources could not last more than eighteen months by their most optimistic appraisal, and they started a war in the vast area of the Pacific without enough merchant shipping to sustain the areas they conquered.<sup>26</sup>

Even the relative success of the attack on Pearl Harbor did not provide the Japanese with the results they expected. In the short term, the operational success of Pearl Harbor gave them the time to conquer the Southeast Asia Resource Areas and establish their planned defensive perimeter without significant interference from United States forces. However, in the long term view, Pearl Harbor significantly damaged the Japanese ability to achieve their strategic goal. What Japan failed to understand was, “the smaller the penalty you demand from your opponent, the less you can expect him to try and deny it to you.”<sup>27</sup> Pearl Harbor was not a small penalty. By attacking the United States without warning, Japan awakened America to such an extent that the

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<sup>24</sup> Prange, Gordon W, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor*, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1991), 301.

<sup>25</sup> Ikle, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Dunnigan, James F. and Albert A. Nofi. *Victory at Sea: World War II in the Pacific*, (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1995), 59-63, 330-332, 358-361.

<sup>27</sup> Clausewitz, 81.

losses were considered an extreme and unjust penalty. A penalty for which only victory on America's terms could satisfy the American public. Ikle's thoughts on how success promotes defeat are enlightening. He says "a battle won should count on the plus side only if it fits into a larger design for ending the war on favorable terms; otherwise it might have as disastrous consequences for the winner as did the battle the Japanese won at Pearl Harbor."<sup>28</sup> Instead of weakening the American will to fight, Pearl Harbor galvanized the American will.

When the United States' will to fight proved to be more resilient than the Japanese had planned the Japanese were left without a method to achieve their strategic goals. Japan was reduced to fighting not to lose instead of fighting to win. Since their own analysis told them that American would be "well-nigh impossible" to beat militarily, they had little choice other than to sue for peace themselves. In a culture steeped in the Bushido tradition, that was a pill too bitter to swallow for over three and a half years.

## THE SOVIET UNION'S WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on 27 December 1979. The strategic goal of the Soviet Union was not the conquest and occupation of Afghanistan, their strategic goal was to rehabilitate the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan's army and use it to restore and maintain order in the country.<sup>29</sup> The internal strife rampant within Afghanistan was seen by the Soviets as a threat to the stability of the region. More importantly, the unpredictability of the Afghani Prime Minister, Hafizullah Amin, threatened to roll back socialism in Afghanistan,<sup>30</sup> a ideological threat that the Soviet Union was not willing to ignore.

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<sup>28</sup> Ikle, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Cassidy, Robert M, *Russia in Afghanistan and Chechnya: Military Strategic Culture and the Paradoxes of Asymmetric Conflict*, (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2003) 14.

<sup>30</sup> Blank, Stephen J, *Operational and Strategic Lessons of the War in Afghanistan, 1979-1990*, (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 1991), 7.

The Soviet Union leadership saw their invasion of Afghanistan as a conventional operation. “They intended to quickly seize the capital and key positions in order to replace the existing government with one that was loyal to them and pacify the country without resorting to direct Soviet administration or intervention.”<sup>31</sup> The insurgency that was causing the internal strife in Afghanistan was not viewed as a factor that would compromise this goal. The scale of the insurgency, and its potential to get worse once Soviet forces were introduced into the country, was completely misread by the Soviet leadership. They also “vastly overestimated the ability of the newly installed leader, Babrak Karmal, to implement a credible program that would command public support or win legitimacy.”<sup>32</sup>

The Soviets were surprised at the depth and effectiveness of the insurgency. Their initial attempts to suppress it were tempered by their desire to stick to their original goal of using the Afghani Army to quell the problems. The troops they used to support the Afghani Army’s efforts to fight the insurgents were not elite troops, they were low grade motor rifle units. These units, composed mainly of Muslim soldiers, proved to be militarily incompetent and politically unreliable and were quickly replaced.<sup>33</sup>

Instead of providing a shield for Karmal’s government to get on its feet and establish effective rule in Afghanistan, the Soviet invasion made the insurgency worse. What the Soviet leadership envisioned as a short-term intervention to stabilize the area became a full-blown insurgency. It gave the Afghani people a cause to rally upon and link to the Islamic insurgency and swelled the ranks of their enemy, the Mujahideen.<sup>34</sup> The common enemy united the Mujahideen much more than they had been prior to the invasion. Robert Baumann’s characterization of the nature of the Mujahideen resistance is instructive. “Their reaction

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<sup>31</sup> Roy, Oliver, *The Lessons of the Soviet/Afghan War*, (London, UK: Brassey’s, 1991), 17.

<sup>32</sup> Blank, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>34</sup> Roy, 17.

throughout the country could not be characterized as nationalistic. Rather, it was founded upon a historically conditioned, instinctive opposition to foreign intrusions, reinforced by a deep resentment against interference by outsiders in local village and religious affairs.”<sup>35</sup>

What the Soviet leadership envisioned as a limited conflict was viewed in an entirely different light by the Mujahideen. In Clausewitzian terms, the Soviets had failed to understand “the kind of war that they were embarking upon and mistook it for something that was alien to its nature.”<sup>36</sup> The Mujahideen were in a total war, while the Soviets were limiting themselves to a limited war.

Prior to their invasion, the Soviets never intended to destroy the insurgency. What thought they gave to it was directed more at facilitating its destruction by Karmal’s government. The Soviets also did not plan to occupy all of the country. They only wanted to occupy those areas that were essential to installing the new government. The evidence suggests that the insurgent’s will to fight was not considered at all, at least not initially. The initial Soviet goals were all to be achieved “with a strictly limited level of military commitment.”<sup>37</sup> Their initial strategic misunderstanding of the conflict led to operational objectives that were not resourced to achieve the political goals of the invasion. Even with more resources, the initial operational objectives were not directed in a coherent plan that would further the national goals.

Once the Soviets realized the extent of the insurgency, they changed their operational emphasis from providing a shield to allow time for the Karmal led government forces to become effective to breaking the will of the people to support the Mujahideen. “Soviet operations did not aim as much at defeating the Mujahideen as they did aim to intimidate and terrorize the population into abandoning areas of intense resistance and withdrawing support for the

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<sup>35</sup> Baumann, Robert F, *Russian-Soviet Unconventional Wars in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1993), 135.

<sup>36</sup> Clausewitz, 88.

<sup>37</sup> Cassidy, 14.

insurgency.”<sup>38</sup> In this regard, the Soviets failed. Their operations designed to limit and reduce support for the insurgency were unsuccessful. Ironically, it appears that the very actions they took to undermine the will of the enemy and its potential support actually reinforced the desire to unite against and resist the common enemy.

The Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan initially achieved all of its operational objectives. But their strategic misreading of the insurgency prior to that invasion insured that meeting these operational goals would not result in their strategic goals being met. They initially misunderstood their enemy and the nature of the conflict they had initiated. After they realized what they were up against, “the Kremlin’s leadership simply was unwilling to make a larger troop commitment when the numbers that might be necessary for victory were unclear in the first place, and the political and economic costs of such escalation would be too high.”<sup>39</sup>

## **SIGNIFICANT FACTORS INFLUENCING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENEMY’S WILL**

The historical case studies all demonstrate that understanding the factors influencing an enemy’s will to fight is challenging at best. In each of the case studies, the aggressor nation characterized their enemy will in a way to suit their desired ends. None of the aggressors seemed to ask the obvious question, “What if the enemy doesn’t act as we predict?” The enemy’s will seemingly had a single breaking point that could be identified and attacked. The aggressors all characterized their enemy’s will as a whole. In modern parlance, the aggressor saw the enemy’s will to fight as the strategic center of gravity in the struggle. Understandably, the operational objectives were tied to the strategic appraisal of the situation. Yet when the operational objectives were met, and they were in each case, and there were no signs forthcoming that the strategic goals

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 28-29.

were not, each of the aggressors clung to their original plan for long periods of time. The Japanese fought the whole of the war with the United States looking for the decisive operational sea battle that would force America to sue for peace. The Soviet Union was the only one who eventually changed their operational objectives to meet the reality of the situation.

In each of these case studies, the aggressors neglect Clausewitz's claim that everything in war is subordinated to the decision by force of arms. Each targets the enemy's will to fight as the key to success. A simple analysis might conclude that this proves Clausewitz's case, but that would simplifying the problem too much. What it does mean is that the relationship between an adversary's will to fight and their real or perceived means to fight is much more complicated than it would appear. Clausewitz said that "the interaction between the two are inseparable and that the moral [will] is the more fluid of them, spreading more easily to affect everything else."<sup>40</sup>

What the case studies do show is that attempting to defeat an enemy's will to fight by attacking the whole of his will is exceedingly difficult. Samuel Griffiths explained the dangers of attacking an enemy's will when he spoke about guerilla war. "It is not dependent for success on the efficient operation of complex mechanical devices, logistical systems, or electronic computers. Its basic element is man, and man is more complex than any of his machines. He is endowed with intelligence, emotion, and will."<sup>41</sup> Although he was speaking specifically about guerilla warfare, his thoughts apply to attacking an enemy's will to continue resisting in any type of conflict.

Attacks on a nation or group's will are attacks on their collective intelligence, emotions and desires. These are driven by individual components coalescing into a whole. Attacking the component parts of the will is easier and potentially more predictable. Predictability is something a nation is looking to maximize prior to initiating or expanding a war. From the case studies we

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<sup>40</sup> Clausewitz, 97.

<sup>41</sup> Cassidy, 25.

have seen that none of the aggressors were successful in predicting the impact of their operations on their enemy's will to fight.

## **U.S. DOCTRINAL REVIEW AND ANALYSIS**

The doctrine used by the United States in its planning for and conduct of war is designed to be both effective in generating the desired outcome, and predictive in its assessment of the requirements necessary for the nation to achieve its desired endstate. As required by the Constitution, the doctrine used by the military takes its directions from the civilian leadership of the nation. At the national level, the key to U.S. doctrine is planning. Effective strategic level planning sets the stage for successful conflict resolution on terms that satisfy the stated political goals of the nation. Since wars are won and lost at the strategic and operational level, the emphasis to, in effect, win the war before it ever begins by efficient and effective planning is understandable. The move of the United States military toward smaller, but more effective forces combined with the increased utilization of effects based operations has also reduced the margin of error for miscalculation in current and future military operations. Today, the American military seeks to use only enough forces to accomplish the objective. If mistakes are made in the calculations of forces required there won't be a surplus of forces to correct the error. In Operation Iraqi Freedom, the enemy failed to follow the course of action that the U.S. planned for and this reduced margin of error came back to haunt American forces.

Realistic planning has always been a key component of military operations, but to a large extent, during Operation Iraqi Freedom and operations to follow it has become even more important because operations are executed more along the margins of success than was the case even ten years ago. Current doctrine has embraced the concept of effects-based operations. The kinetic focused approach to undertaking military operations has been reduced to a component of effects-based operations. The doctrine that emphasized the deployment and use of overwhelming combat power used during Desert Storm has been overtaken by doctrine that seeks to determine

the minimum force required to achieve the desired effects. The great sweeping offensives with contiguous front lines and huge logistics footprints have been replaced with ‘Shock and Awe,’ noncontiguous lines and the bare minimum of forces.

## LINKING STRATEGIC GOALS TO OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Joint Publication 3-0 (JP 3-0) clearly lays out the linkage between strategic goals to operational objectives. As the guidance moves from the top of the strategic tier to the lower end of the strategic tier, the guidance becomes more specific. The President and the Secretary of Defense provide the military with strategic guidance and direction.<sup>42</sup> The guidance stated in the *National Security Strategy* and National Policy Statements is embedded in the military’s *National Military Strategy*. The *National Military Strategy* “provides strategic guidance for the employment of military forces.”<sup>43</sup> At the national level, the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan “provides a coherent framework for the capabilities-based advice that the military has provided to the President and Secretary of Defense.”<sup>44</sup> Whereas the proceeding documents all flowed down from or through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Theater Security Cooperation Plans goes from the combatant commander to the Chairman. The combatant commander takes the guidance received from the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, applies it to his geographic area of responsibility and determines how to best support the national strategic objectives within his region.<sup>45</sup>

The key link between the strategic goals and operational objectives resides at the level of the combatant commander. “Directives flow from the President and Secretary of Defense through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the combatant commanders, who plan and conduct

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<sup>42</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 3.0, Doctrine for Joint Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004), I-2-4.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, I-4.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, I-5.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

operations that achieve national and alliance and/or coalition strategic objectives.”<sup>46</sup> Combatant commanders play an important and direct role in formulating both the strategic and operational plans.

In their role as the planners and executors of the operations that are intended to achieve the nation’s goals, the combatant commanders are in the unique position to influence strategic goals if problems arise during planning or execution. With effects based operations, a holistic approach that fully integrates all of the elements of the nation’s power, becoming more and more prevalent in the military, it will likely be at the combatant commander level or below that subtle, but potentially serious problems, surface as the planning of an operation gets into the details of how specific strategic goals will be achieved at the operational level.

*JP 5-0* quotes Napoleon in putting campaign planning into perspective. “In forming the plan of a campaign, it is requisite to foresee everything the enemy may do, and be prepared with the necessary means to counteract it.”<sup>47</sup> Operation Iraqi Freedom combined the elements of two separate types of operations, major combat operations and military operations other than war. The doctrine lays out the campaign planning considerations for the different types of operations, but does not discuss the requirement or advisability to sequence, weight, or shape operations when separate types of operations are present within one campaign.

Which of the two types of operations requires the most effort or resources to achieve the nation’s goals? Perhaps more fundamentally, which of the two types of operations is more critical to the ultimate success of the war and the peace that follows? The current and projected kinetic capabilities of U.S. forces almost guarantees that major combat operations voluntarily entered into by American forces will be won by them. The technology and training that allows American forces to destroy the enemy’s capabilities with precision and relatively little loss of life among

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, I-7.

<sup>47</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 5.0, Doctrine for Joint Operations Planning, 2d Draft*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004) IV-2.

both friend and foe wins the major combat operations, but does not always apply neatly in military operations other than war. Historically, winning the war has always been much easier than setting the stage in war for an enduring peace to follow. For that to happen effectively, the enemy's will to continue fighting must be broken.

## **INCORPORATING WILL INTO OPERATIONAL PLANNING**

Breaking the enemy's will is exactly what *JP 5-0* calls when it says, "In examining the proposed national strategic end state, the supported JFC and the staff must determine if military operations will break the adversary's will and lead him to accept the strategic endstate."<sup>48</sup> The linkage between the adversary's will and achieving the long term goals of the nation are clear in this statement. Unfortunately, the bulk of U.S. doctrine does not explicitly address the need to assess or break the will of the enemy with such clarity. The majority of references to assessing the will of the enemy are found in white papers produced by the Joint Forces Command as the United States military struggles to change its conceptual approach to planning and executing military operations.

The reality of the world environment has brought on a major shift in the United States' approach. Without a known threat, the U.S. has shifted from a threat-based to a capabilities-based military force.<sup>49</sup> With this shift, the requirement to assess an enemy's will to resist our actions in both the short and long term has become even more important today. In the conflicts of today we face an enemy that willingly blows themselves up to further a cause that on the surface seems hopeless.

*JP-5.0* tangentially addresses will in the section Campaign Planning for Military Operations Other Than War. This section specifies the need to look at the following

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, IV-12.

<sup>49</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The Joint Operational Environment – Into the Future, Final Draft*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2004) 3-7.

considerations when planning this type of campaign: “the nature of the society in the Operational Area, the nature of external forces, the nature of the crisis and possible influencing factors, and the impact of time as it effects the environment and key players.”<sup>50</sup> What is interesting is that doctrine specifies these considerations’ impact only on military operations other than war and not major combat operations.

The white paper, *Joint Operational Environment – Into the Future* has some key insights that address both the enemy’s will to continue the fight as well as our own will. As mentioned earlier in the monograph, will is defined to some degree in the *Joint Operational Environment*. This white paper has some explicit references to attacking the enemy’s will that will be addressed.

The *Joint Operational Environment* points out the importance of maintaining our national will. Specifying that it is critical to our success to effectively defend it while simultaneously attacking the enemy’s national will.<sup>51</sup> In the white paper, time and its relationship to the enemy will to resist is viewed from a different perspective than the norm. Taking longer to do something in the military is usually viewed as less than positive. Yet, the *Joint Operational Environment* has the interesting observation that taking longer can actually help in some cases because it can “present more opportunities for striking perceived elements of an opponents will.”<sup>52</sup>

What’s extremely interesting is the assumption embedded in the words, ‘perceived elements of an opponents will.’ What exactly are those elements and where are they discussed? It is likely that on an intuitive sense, commanders and staff officers understand that an opponent’s will is made up different elements. However, if the term is not clearly defined and there is no clear start point for analysis then the potential for misreading the enemy grows. This has the potential to be a problem within a staff if the commander and staff leadership do not clearly

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<sup>50</sup> JP 5.0, IV-7,8.

<sup>51</sup> *The Joint Operational Environment*, 84.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

define the problem. The potential for misunderstanding grows as commanders and staffs work vertically in an area that is ill defined in doctrine.

Most of the best insights on ways to reduce the enemy's will in the *Joint Operational Environment* are not explicit. It states that "understanding the nature of the states involved in the conflict and their degree of stability is key to calculating the center of gravity, the nature of the military campaign, and any desired outcomes."<sup>53</sup> If the U.S. military does not understand how the enemy's will impacts the nature of the state, it will be challenging to determine the nature of the future campaign. "The strength of the contending states, their political leadership, the military, the police, the population, or combination of them,"<sup>54</sup> as described by the white paper is in reality a form of Clausewitz's trinity. Moreover, while it is certainly important to understand the relationship as the plan is beginning to develop, it is probably more important to understand how the relationship will change, positively or negatively, as a result of our operations. Will our operations change the center of gravity, the nature of the conflict or state? This becomes the second and third order effects generated by our effects based operations and needs to be explicitly discussed in doctrine. When we design operations to have an effect on what we consider the strength of a contending state, we change the dynamics of the entire operation. Because the nature of the state is determined to a large degree by people, the change in dynamics cannot always be accurately predicted. The change may be positive or negative; the key is to understand that there will be a change and that our operations will likely have to be modified accordingly.

"In a complex operational environment, some of the smallest activities and interactions cause the largest effects. No activity is subject to accurate prediction. Instead, outcomes will become possibilities that undergo confirmation or denial processes."<sup>55</sup> Doctrine is clear that, where the enemy's will is concerned, the U.S. is challenged to develop a strategy that will

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 80.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 136.

provide the desired endstate. “Knowing the enemy will become more and more difficult, as he will learn, adapt, and become smarter and more cunning.”<sup>56</sup> In a way, the United States’ overwhelming strength in conventional conflict has forced its potential adversaries to adapt or die. Instead of contesting the U.S. military in a conventional way, its potential enemies will seek to minimize the American’s clear strengths, which clearly lie in major combat operations, and maximize U.S. weaknesses which are perceived to lie in military operations other than war. The adaptation of the enemy, in turn forces the U.S. to adapt its doctrinal focus.

## DOCTRINAL FOCUS

Until recently, the United States military doctrine has been focused on major combat operations. It took until 2004 for a draft version of *FM-I, 3-07.22, COIN Operations* to be published. Since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism there has certainly been a shift in focus towards military operations other than war, but prior to and during the planning and execution of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom the U.S. focus was driven by the theory that helped shape its doctrine.

Clausewitzian and Jominian thought are prominent in American doctrine. Though others, such as Ward and Sun Tzu, have contributed in the recent past, these two dominate. With their stress on major combat operations, it is no surprise that U.S. doctrine stressed it as well. According to LTC Peterson “our theoretical constructs caused the military to think incorrectly of post-*fighting* actions as post-*war* issues [emphasis in the original].”<sup>57</sup> The theory that the doctrine rests upon has led the American military to focus too much on major combat operations and not enough on military operations other than war that occur afterwards or in parallel with major combat operations. This in turn has led to an unconscious belief that achieving the national goals

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 132.

<sup>57</sup> Peterson, Steven W, “Central But Inadequate: The Application of Theory in Operation Iraqi Freedom,” (National Defense University), 12.

can be done more effectively and quickly by focusing on planning and executing the major combat operations correctly. Put in other terms, the U.S. doctrine, and the theory that it rests upon, has led it to plan to win the war, not win a peace that will survive the occupation of its forces.

A major problem with focusing on major combat operations at the expense of military operations other than war is that the focus is likely to be on the short term future. As discussed earlier in this monograph, the very nature of the adversary and conflict may very well change drastically as a result of major combat operations. The majority of the time, it is the long term future that should be the primary focus. In the words of Charles Ikle, “Most of the exertion is devoted to the means – perfecting the military instruments and deciding on their use in battles and campaigns – and far too little is left for relating those means to their ends.”<sup>58</sup> In limited wars, the desired ends cannot be achieved without a thorough understanding of the enemy’s will. It is not enough for the campaign or battle to destroy the enemy’s army; it has to destroy his will or at least contribute to its destruction.

## **OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM AND THE WILL OF THE ENEMY**

At the beginning of this monograph Clausewitz’s three objectives to winning a war were discussed: destroying an adversary’s army, seizing critical territory to both make the enemy fight and deny him the opportunity to recover from losses, and breaking the adversary’s will to continue to fight. From its conception, Operation Iraqi Freedom remained true to the American theoretical and doctrinal foundations discussed earlier in this monograph. However, for American forces to be successful in the future in winning not just the nations wars but also a lasting peace it must place more emphasis on understanding the human dimension of its real and potential enemies. A nation can win its wars by focusing on the Clausewitz’s first two objectives, but it can only win the peace by accomplishing all three of them.

Operation Iraqi Freedom was designed to achieve all three of these objectives. U.S. Army and Marine ground forces, supported by massive airpower would destroy any of Saddam Hussein's forces that were willing to fight and seize the critical parts of Iraq that would help ensure the fall of Hussein's regime. A significant effort was made to destroy the Iraqi will to fight. The term "Shock and Awe" came into use by the media to signify the U.S. ability to both physically destroy targets as well negatively impact the enemy's will to continue fighting against overwhelming power. Psychological warfare operations successfully convinced a large number of Iraqi units to refuse to fight. Early in the war, President Bush described the success of these operations to the United Kingdom's Prime Minister Tony Blair when he said, "Thousands are just taking off their uniforms and going home."<sup>59</sup> The primary U.S. goals in Operation Iraqi Freedom where "to eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, end Iraqi threats to its neighbors, to stop Iraqi links to international terrorism, maintain Iraq's unit and territorial integrity, liberate the Iraqi people from tyranny and assist them in creating a democracy."<sup>60</sup>

Despite some minor tactical setbacks securing the long and tenuous logistical lines of communications, Operation Iraqi Freedom had all of the appearances of an unqualified success in May of 2003 when President Bush declared that major combat operations were over with the removal of Hussein's regime. Phase IV of Operation Iraqi Freedom had officially begun with American and Coalition forces shifting their focus to building a stable and democratic Iraq. General Tommy Franks', Commanding General of Central Command, comments on this transition provide a valuable insight into how Phase IV was viewed by at least some of the senior American leaders. "Phase IV would be a crucial period. Having won the war, we would have to secure the peace. And securing the peace would not be easy."<sup>61</sup> While he was correct to term

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<sup>58</sup> Ikle, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Woodward, Bob, *Plan of Attack*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 403.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 154-155.

<sup>61</sup> Franks, Tommy and Malcom McConnell, *American Soldier*, (New York, NY: Regan Books, 2004), 420.

Phase IV a crucial period, the war had not been actually won. Recall the comments of LTC Peterson earlier in this monograph and before the publishing of General Franks' book. Franks' simple comments highlight the conceptual tendency of "the military to think incorrectly of post-*fighting* actions as post-*war* issues."

A major part of the conceptual challenges with conducting Operation Iraqi Freedom was the lack of understanding of the enemy's will to continue to resist the American and Coalition aims after Saddam Hussein was removed from power. Early in the planning process, an assumption was made at the strategic level that if the United States became directly involved in the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, the Iraqi people would welcome American forces into their country.<sup>62</sup> This assumption was actually based on another assumption. As a ruthless dictator, his own people should not support Saddam Hussein if the possibility of a better future was possible.<sup>63</sup> As the monograph discussed in the historical case study of the German deliberations to begin unrestricted submarine warfare in World War I, making strategic level assumptions that rest upon assumptions about how human beings will react in a given situation is extremely hazardous, even if the commanders and staffs of the operational level do not rely on them in their planning.

This assumption ties directly into the force structure that was designed for Operation Iraqi Freedom and the focus on major combat operations at the expense of Phase IV requirements. With Saddam Hussein out of power, his army defeated, demoralized and deserted, and most if not all of the critical terrain in the country occupied by Coalition forces Phase IV should have been challenging but manageable. Why would America need more forces than those required to execute and win major combat operations? They would need more forces because the Iraqi people did not welcome the Americans with open arms. An important minority, for various

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<sup>62</sup> Woodward, 81.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

reasons summoned the will resist. Their opportunity to establish themselves was actually brought about by the very plan designed to achieve the nations' strategic goals and was foreseen by Combined Forces Land Component Commands planners.

Prior to the beginning of hostilities LTC Peterson says the Phase IV planning group concluded that the campaign plan would produce conditions that were at odds with the strategic objectives.<sup>64</sup> More troops were needed. Unfortunately, the nation's strategic leadership had pushed to limit the amount of troops involved in Iraq from the beginning of the planning process. Discussion about Phase IV planning between General Franks and the nation's civilian leadership focused more on the amount of troops needed than strategy.<sup>65</sup> Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld became personally involved in the deployment process and changed the way forces were notified in an effort to help the diplomatic process.<sup>66</sup> The new process required General Franks and his subordinate units to individually request specific forces in a method known as Request For Forces. This request was then either approved or denied by the Secretary of Defense. This process had major ramifications for the force that was deployed to Iraq. When requesting troops for Iraq, the driving factor for the Combined Forces Land Component Command staff and commander was the number of troops in each request – the perception was that asking for too many troops ran the risk of being disapproved.<sup>67</sup> Overall troop strength had more of an impact on the force structure than operational requirements.

This was the prevailing environment in Combined Forces Land Component Command when the Phase IV planning group identified the potentially dangerous problems with plan. Because the plan called for Phase III, Major Combat Operations, to “break all of the control mechanisms of the Hussein regime, its collapse would bring with it a risk of an influx of terrorists

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<sup>64</sup> Peterson, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Woodward, 148.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 233-234.

<sup>67</sup> Benson, Kevin, COL, Interview by author, 21 September 2004, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

from outside Iraq, a rise in criminal activity, and probable hostile actions from former regime members.”<sup>68</sup>

Again holding true to their doctrinal and conceptual foundations, as well as Clausewitz, American military power in the campaign was focused primarily on destroying the Iraqi center of gravity. Prior to the beginning of the war, American commanders and staffs identified Baghdad as the center of gravity of the Saddam Regime.<sup>69</sup> There was no question in their minds that with the fall of Baghdad, Hussein would be effectively, if not literally, removed from power.

Unfortunately, nature abhors a vacuum. With Saddam Hussein gone there would be a large vacuum in Iraq and not enough American and Coalition troops to fill the void. The United States did not answer the question about what would fill the void once Saddam Hussein was no longer in power. With three large cultural divides in Iraq, the Sunnis, Shi’ites, and Kurds, there was potential for one if not all to try and achieve their vision of a new Iraq, if not the American vision. The Combined Forces Land Component Chief of Plans, COL Kevin Benson, himself a strong advocate for more troops in Phase IV operations, believes that , “in retrospect, we probably should have seen the need to develop a change in the center of gravity after the fall of Baghdad.”<sup>70</sup> LTG William Wallace echoed those comments when he said, “There was a point when the regime was no longer relevant. We missed an opportunity for the Iraqi people to become part of the solution instead of standing on the sidelines waiting to see how things turned out.”<sup>71</sup>

The very vacuum in power in Iraq planned for and created by United States forces created the conditions for Phase IV foreseen by LTC Peterson, COL Benson, and perhaps a few others. These conditions would actually require more troops to maintain order after the war than

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<sup>68</sup> Peterson, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Benson, Kevin, COL, Interview by author, 21 September 2004, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Coon, Charlie. “General: U.S. Didn’t Note Post-Invasion Iraq Power Shift Quickly Enough.” *European Stars and Stripes*, 30 September 2004, p. 1.

during it. The difference in troop requirements for Phase III and Phase IV cannot be overstated enough. Phase III required Coalition troops to fight to Baghdad and take it, securing the critical lines of communications along the way. Phase IV required those same forces to maintain order and stability in the *entire country*. In Phase III, the troops were relatively massed in order to concentrate power. The requirements for Phase IV dictated the necessity to spread out throughout the country in order to enforce and preserve stability. The solid mass used for Phase III was far too diluted to be fully effective in Phase IV.

Frederick Kagan believes that the potentially “most difficult task facing a state that desires to change the regime in another state is securing the support of the defeated populace for the new government.”<sup>72</sup> Regime change was an explicit goal for President Bush. The entire campaign was focused to ensure the rapid and complete destruction of the Hussein regime. In talking about securing the support of the defeated population Kagan goes on to say that “the armed forces must do more than break things and kill people. They must secure critical population centers and state infrastructure. They have to maintain order.”<sup>73</sup>

The only way that the troops numbers required for Phase IV would be less than those required for Phase III would be in a situation where the liberators, the Coalition, was actually welcomed with open arms. This brings the reader back to a fundamental assumption of the American leadership on how the Iraqi people would respond to the Coalition invasion. Even if the American military had not bought into this assumption, it was operative at the highest levels of civilian leadership – and that was the level where decisions were made on the amount of troops that could be brought into theater for the campaign.

Fundamentally, this is a question of assessing the will of the enemy to continue to resist. It is not a question of capabilities or territory. Sun Tzu says to know the enemy and know

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<sup>72</sup> Kagan, Frederick W, “War and Aftermath.” *Policy Review* (August – September 2003), 11.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

yourself is the only way to ensure victory.<sup>74</sup> But the ability to read the mind of an enemy, or even a potential enemy, has eluded the military throughout history. It is more realistic to take into account the most dangerous enemy course of action – those actions the enemy can take to cause the friendly plan to fail. Other than employing weapons of mass destruction, clearly, and in hindsight, the enemy most dangerous course of action was to continue to resist the Coalition occupation of Iraq.

It seems that American leadership thought that once Baghdad, the center of gravity, had fallen, the enemy's will ceased to matter because the enemy had been defeated and his beaten down country would welcome the Coalition troops as liberators. A few malcontents would probably resist, but they wouldn't have the means to do so for long. This reasoning is understandable given the focus of the American military doctrine at the time Operation Iraqi Freedom was planned and executed, but needs to change in the future to place more emphasis on the enemy's potential will to resist.

The United States simply did not have enough troops on the ground in Iraq to set the conditions for the stability needed to ensure a lasting peace.

“In Iraq the presence of the equivalent of four divisions provided the coalition with the ability to control Baghdad and Basra and, subsequently (and with some difficulty), Mosul, Tikrit, and other important population centers. There were not enough ground forces to do the job adequately, and they were not sufficiently trained to transition immediately from war-fighting to peacekeeping. With more ground forces immediately available and a better thought-out plan for using them as the war ended, much of this difficulty could have been avoided. It is unlikely that those failures will have denied us the achievement of our political goal in Iraq, but they have certainly made it harder.”<sup>75</sup>

There were not enough troops on the ground because the American civilian and military leadership did not believe the Iraqi's would resist the change in their government after Saddam Hussein was removed from power. “Prior to the war, the Army Chief of Staff, GEN Eric

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<sup>74</sup> Tzu, Sun, *The Art of War*, Translated by Sammeuel B. Griffith, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1963), 84.

<sup>75</sup> Kaplan, 13.

Shinseki, said publicly that he thought the invasion plan lacked sufficient manpower, and he was slapped down by the Pentagon's civilian leadership for saying so.”<sup>76</sup>

Regardless of what the majority of the Iraqi people wanted, there was enough credible evidence from the pre-invasion staff work to know that the United States would create the conditions for an insurgency. The very makeup of Iraq, with its diverse religious, political and tribal issues was a recipe for an insurgency. The relatively low numbers of coalition troops on the ground once major combat operations were declared over served to allow these different actors to perceive an opportunity to advance their cause. Their perception of opportunity fed off the inability of the Coalition to provide a pervasive presence throughout the country. It was the American civilian and military leadership's failure to understand the importance of taking the enemy's will to fight into full account that precipitated the problem. The potential insurgents perceived weakness in the occupying forces – there simply weren't enough to control the country. This fed his perception of opportunity and encouraged the enemy's will to coalesce and become a full fledged insurgency.

The mental changes required to move from conducting major combat operations to military operations other than war are more complex than this monograph can cover, but the focus of American doctrine, and as a result training, on major combat operations instead of military operations other than war certainly contributed to the difficulty in this transition in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

A final point should be highlighted in Kaplan's quote above. The war in Iraq has not ended. The American political and military leadership accept Clausewitz's dictum, “War is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument carried on with other means. The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation

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<sup>76</sup> Wright, Robin and Thomas E. Ricks. “Bremer Criticizes Troop Levels.” *Washington Post*, 5 October 2004, p. 1.

from their purpose.”<sup>77</sup> Until America’s political goals are achieved in Iraq, the war has not ended. Those goals will not be achieved without breaking the enemy’s will to resist to such an extent that they cannot influence to any degree the change in form of the Iraqi government.

## **CONCLUSION**

Although misunderstanding the Iraqi will to fight did not cause the problems the United States and its Coalition Allies are facing in Iraq today, it certainly contributed to those problems. On its opening pages, this monograph accepted Clausewitz’s statements inferring that war is a contest of wills. Each opposing side trying to enforce its will upon the other and by extension breaking the respective will of their opponents. In turn this led to the monograph’s conclusion that will, as it relates to military capacity, is a central concept in war.

The efforts of the United States military to understand will are hampered by its lack of definition. What one person means when they use the term will may or may not be the same as another. Only by defining will can this central concept and its many ramifications be properly understood and acted upon. Accordingly, the following definition was suggested as a starting point for fully understanding and exploiting will’s place in war: the combination of multiple components that coalesce into a collective desire of a group, or groups, to initiate or continue actions to achieve a desired goal.

As was stated earlier, will is an enigma. It manifests itself as a whole, but its component parts shape it. Understanding those components is easier than understanding the whole of will. The components of will can come from many different areas. Tribal and family ties, religious and cultural beliefs, economic well being, real and potential allies, and the naked pursuit of power all have the capacity, in greater or lesser degrees, of coalescing into a single collective desire.

Defining and understanding the term will, as it relates to military capacity, is of no use to the American military if the definition and understanding do not directly contribute to the useful

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<sup>77</sup> Clausewitz, 87.

application of the elements of national power in pursuit of national goals and objectives.

Understanding how and why the components shape the whole the way they do can lead the American military to ways to effectively counter the enemy's will. It takes the problem of understanding will out of a conceptual framework and puts it into a form that commanders and staffs can use to solve the problem.

Solving the problem of understanding the enemy's will to fight has been challenging throughout history. The Germans in World War I failed in two explicit attempts to break the will of their enemies. In 1915, Germany tried to break the French will to fight at Verdun. In 1917, they tried to break the English will to fight through unrestricted submarine warfare. Both attempts failed. The latter case virtually assured Germany's eventual defeat by bringing America into the conflict against Germany. The Japanese decision in 1941 to initiate war with America by attacking the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor was designed to enable Japan time to establish a defensive perimeter around her Southeastern Pacific conquests and coerce the Americans into accepting Japan's expanded empire. Pearl Harbor was to be the decisive battle that dictated the course of the war. Unfortunately for Japan, the defeat galvanized American will to win, regardless of the cost. From the Japanese perspective, this was the worst possible American reaction and ensured their eventual defeat. The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan achieved all of its operational objectives, but failed to achieve their strategic objectives. They began the conflict without understanding their enemy and the type of conflict they initiated. It took an extended amount of time before the Soviet Union admitted they were actually fighting an insurgency, and then they were unwilling to commit the amount of troops necessary to win it.

The historical analysis demonstrates that attempting to defeat an enemy's will by attacking it as a whole is challenging. The aggressors in each of the case studies failed to ask themselves what they would do if the enemy failed to respond as predicted. Each characterized their enemy's will as a whole and attacked it as such. At the operational level, each of the

aggressors met their objectives. However, their operational success did not translate into strategic success.

Current American military doctrine and thought has met with the same challenges in Iraq. Saddam Hussein was the Iraqi center of gravity. When he fell, success was assumed to follow closely behind. It wasn't going to happen overnight, but the U.S. was confident enough in its eventual success that plans were immediately drawn up to redeploy the troops home.

Like the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the United States did not envision fighting an insurgency after they had removed Saddam Hussein. Other than Baath Party loyalists, who would want to fight to restore a ruthless dictator? The nature of Iraq's makeup, Sunnis, Shi'ites and Kurds, with their longstanding differences should have gotten more attention than it did. The reason that it didn't can be attributed, at least in part, to the assumptions that were made on how American liberators (or occupiers – depending on one's point of view) were viewed by the Iraqi people.

The American doctrinal focus on major combat operations played a large part in shaping the final plan for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Despite warnings from the Combined Forces Land Component Staff that their plan would actually facilitate conditions for an insurgency unless more troops were added to the force structure, the Americans executed the operation as planned. The prevailing view, supported by doctrine, was that the war would be decided during major combat operations. What most realize today, is that the short term successes of major combat operations would merely set the conditions for the long term challenges of military operations other than war.

Major combat operations destroyed Hussein's regime and drove him from power. The focus of these operations created a vacuum of power in Iraq. Without enough troops on the ground to create at least the perception of power and stability throughout the country, the American plan enabled potential adversaries to see the possibility of changing the future form of Iraqi government to something they could define, instead of America and its Coalition Allies.

When American leadership focused solely on defeating the will of Hussein and his government, they facilitated the conditions that brought about the insurgency.

There is no one thing that was the root cause of the American problems in Operation Iraqi Freedom. But the line of thought that American leadership in the position to make fundamental choices on force structure and size chose to take about what Iraq would look like after Saddam Hussein had fallen from power shaped the entire plan. This view saw the Hussein regime as the central problem. Once it was removed all other potential problems were viewed as manageable by the same forces used to remove him. When these American decision-makers confined their view of the Iraqi will to fight to Hussein and his governmental apparatus, they jeopardized their own ability to achieve their strategic goals.

The American military's understanding of how an enemy's will to resist changes the calculus of planning and executing military campaigns is incomplete. In the words of the COL Kevin Benson, "Will is too hard to wrap our arms around."<sup>78</sup> Understanding will involves trying to understand and predict complex human interactions that generate outcomes that are as likely to defy logic as bow to it. But that does not alleviate the necessity of reducing this gap in American military doctrine and thought. The Global War on Terrorism will not be won by the strongest; the side that undermines the collective desire of their enemy to resist will win it.

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<sup>78</sup> Benson, Kevin, COL, Interview by author, 21 September 2004, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

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